3: Wallace & Hoebel E-4, 5 (1933, 1945) 1952
NO6 Comanche NO6

older children left the main camp for the operating base. Mules and pack horses were used to transport the hunting tents, which consisted simply of one or more undercoated skins thrown over a pole resting on crossed stakes. They were also to bring back to the main camp the many hides and quantities of meat that would be taken. Only weapons, tools, and supplies that seemed necessary for the occasion were carried.

There was plenty of hard work for all concerned, but it was work spiced by anticipation of the excitement of great feasts and sharpened by gay social activity. This was really the "Harvest Season." On at least one and possibly for several evenings before the hunting party left the main camp, the people gathered for the Hunting Dance at the central meeting place of the village just as lengthening shadows faded into darkness. The hunting party itself often continued to dance for one or more nights after they had left the main camp. There was no spiritual significance attached to the dance; each Comanche informant insists that the people danced because they "were glad they were going on a hunt." Why not? For the dance a fire was built, unless a bright autumn moon provided sufficient light. There were two, four, or more drummers and singers, always an even number. The drummers and singers were men who had good voices, but for such strictly social dances no medicine powers were essential. Men and women lined up facing each other, and when the music began, the women crossed over and selected a partner. The dancers joined at intervals in the singing. They wore their everyday clothes, for no special ceremonial dress was necessary on this occasion. During the dance one man took care of the fire, but the wood was gathered by any of the enthusiastic dancers who wished to help. About midnight the dance ended and the people scattered to their lodges for sleep.[36]

The regulation of communal buffalo hunts under the strict surveillance of military police was one of the outstanding features of the cultures of practically all the Plains tribes. But of this the Comanches had nothing. They had, of course, no military fraternities such as those which did the policing for the other tribes, and in spite of their fierce individualism they seem not to have had the need for police

[36] Informants: Face Wrinkling Like Getting Old; Kills Something.

3:Wallace & Hoebel E-4, 5 (1933, 1945) 1952
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ing that paper was used for padding inside the shields, Anglo-American pioneers were quite puzzled at the Comanche interest in books. 411

The surface of the shield was stretched into a convex or saucer shape with the convex surface to the outside. A convex surface would readily deflect a blow. The shield was then hung up to dry. Sometimes the shield-maker would unlace the shield and remove the wooden frame, adding, of course, additional packing. This increased the safety of the shield, since a bullet could penetrate the wooden frame more easily than the packing.

A buckskin cover was usually fitted over the flint-like shield, much as a cover is drawn over a spare automobile tire. It was drawn in on the under side by means of a buckskin thong laced through eyelet holes around the edges. Through the hide itself were bored two pairs of holes, and through each pair was passed a loop or band of rawhide or buckskin. By means of these two bands the shield was fastened to the left arm near the elbow in such a manner as not to interfere with the free use of the hand.

After the shield had thoroughly dried and cured, it was treated by setting it up as a target, and if a bullet or an arrow pierced it when fired from a distance of about fifty yards, it found a place in the debris of the camp. In times of action the Indian manipulated his arm so as to make any blow strike the shield at an angle. Very few bullets fired from old-fashioned rifles would penetrate a well-constructed shield unless the bullet struck the surface perpendicularly, a near impossibility when the shield was in the hands of one expert in the art of using it.

The Anglo-American pioneers and soldiers who knew the Comanches well relate that their shields were usually adorned with three kinds of insignia. Bear teeth worn or painted on a shield indicated that the owner was a great hunter or had the toughness of the bear; scalps attached to or painted on the shield indicated its owner to be a mighty warrior, and horse or mule tails that he was an accomplished raider. The materials were attached by means of buckskin strings to the under side of the shield. Around the rim of the outside cover feathers were attached and held in place with sinew. Comanche informants maintained that there should have been an even number, usually four but possibly six or more. The arrangement made it pos- 411 531 [801]

3: Wallace & Hoebel E-4, 5 (1933, 1945) 1952
NO6 Comanche NO6

796 tenuated ritual than that of Post Oak Jim's, which has been presented
755 here. *Kɔwino* said that he described the ceremony as it was performed
184 in later years. That's It, a Water Horse, had heard about the Beaver Ceremony, but had never seen it because it was not performed in his band.

787 Of the dances used by the Comanches in search of power, the
796 Eagle Dance was outstanding. It was sponsored by a prominent member of the band, usually the father or uncle of a youth turning warrior. The sponsor sought out a medicine man with strong eagle or war power and offered a smoke. If the medicine man accepted, he assumed complete charge of the ceremony. The decision was for him a serious one. If he accepted, his own power would be diminished somewhat, since it would be spread among the dancers. On the other hand a refusal might be interpreted as lack of confidence in his own power, as fear to risk spreading it out. In such a case, the medicine man would suffer loss of prestige among his own people. Furthermore, there was the factor of remuneration. Relatives and friends of participants contributed gifts. The medicine leader could keep what he preferred for himself, leaving the remainder for the dancers.

After the medicine man accepted the request, he announced the time and place of the ceremony. He and the dancers arose before daylight, went to the creek, bathed, stripped to the breechclout, put on war paint, let their hair down and put eagle feathers in it, and rubbed themselves with sage. After that they sat in a semicircle, with the opening toward the east, and smoked ceremoniously.

When the smoking was over, the leader arose and, followed closely by the dancers, sneaked silently to a near-by camp to "capture" a girl. Spectators remained some distance apart. In the old days the girl had to be a captive. The girl's family made a pretense of defending their camp against the attacking party, but the "victorious raiders" carried the "captured" girl to their own camp where preparations had been made for the remainder of the ceremony.

● [801] A tipi or brush lodge was used. The medicine leader provided two, four, or six drummers and singers to help—never an odd number. They sat close together facing the east. The girl sat beside the leader. The dancers first assumed a position directly in front, facing east, but when the music began, they formed a circle around the musicians.

6: Linton E-5 (1933)1935 NO6 Comanche NO6

THE COMANCHE SUN DANCE

By RALPH LINTON

796 THE last Comanche Sun Dance was held in 1878, the date being fixed with certainty by an eclipse of the sun visible in Oklahoma in the same year. Even before this time the ceremony seems to have been falling into disuse, due perhaps to the harassed life which the tribe had led during the preceding twenty years. One informant had attended this last dance as a small child, but his memories of it were vague and the account given here must be understood to be based on second hand evidence.[1]

796 619 621 Whether the Sun Dance was ever a regular annual ceremony among the Comanche is uncertain. From at least 1860 on it was held at irregular intervals, whenever some individual received the necessary supernatural sanction. It also seems highly improbable that the whole tribe ever attended a single Sun Dance. The autonomy of the various bands within the tribe was complete and there was little feeling of solidarity among them. Participation seems normally to have been limited to the band of the supervising medicine man with a few others who were in close and friendly contact with it and who came by invitation. Informants frequently described the dance [801] as though only four bands were involved, but this was probably nothing more than a projection of the pattern of using four as a ritualistic number.

796 787 Every dance originated in a supernatural sanction received by some medicine man. This was probably in the form of a dream or vision, although informants were not certain. The originator was usually a young man who was just beginning his career. Those who volunteered to dance were also, as a rule, young men who had few war exploits to their credit. It was said that their subsequent careers would be watched to determine whether the sanction received by the medicine man was authentic and that his reputation would be strongly influenced by their success or failure. The medicine man had complete charge of the ceremony, arranging all the details in accordance with his sanction. From the differences in the accounts given by various informants it seems certain that there was a good deal of variation in the procedure, extending even to differences in the form of the lodge used on different occasions.

796 The ceremony was held approximately in midsummer and continued for eight days, the first four being devoted to the gathering of materials

[1] The present notice seems to be the first report of the Sun Dance among the Comanche. There are, in fact, specific statements of its nonoccurrence in W. P. Clark, Indian Sign Language (Philadelphia, 1885) and James Mooney, Calendar History of the Kiowa Indians (Seventeenth Annual Report, Bureau of American Ethnology, Part 1, 1900), p. 322.

[pp 1-419 not processed]

28: Thomas H-4 (no date) 1962 NO6 Comanche NO6
(1786)

"The only earlier account of Comanche dances known to me is by Clark. After listing the Swift Fox, Gourd, Raven, Buffalo Bull, and Afraid-of-Nothing societies, he states:

> The Comanche had five bands, and claimed that the difference is in the dances prior to getting up a war-party.

In another place he adds:

> The Comanches have the Raven, Buffalo-Bull, Swift-Fox,-all-war dances and Dance of Fear, with shields and lances, when they expect an attack . . . . ."[11]

It is perhaps significant that the bands number five, since five, as is well known, is the pattern number of some of the Basin Shoshoneans.

With regard to the "I" shaped figures in the reproduction here, it has been suggested[12] to the writer that possibly these are crooked lances which are badges of office common to the various military societies found among the Plains Indians generally.[13] Hooked lances as noted by Lowie were among the Comanche typical elements in their military societies:

> A number of questions were asked to determine traces of typical elements of military societies as found among the Plains tribes. In reply to one of these queries I was told that some warriors had hooked sticks with a long spear point at the bottom, the bent part being decorated with two pairs of eagle feathers. I could not ascertain that these regalia were correlated with a special tribal division or dance.[14]

In the case of the Wind River Shoshoni, the hooked sticks, Lowie learned, were used to catch fleeing enemies:

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[11] R. H. Lowie, Dances and Societies of the Plains Shoshone. Anthr. Pap. Am. Mus. Nat. Hist., 11: 809.

[12] The suggestion is Dr. Spier's.

[13] Lowie, Dances and Societies of the Plains Shoshone, (Comanche), 811; (Kiowa), 847 f; (Cheyenne) Kit Fox Society, 896. J. R. Murie, Pawnee Indian Societies. Anthr. Pap. Am. Mus. Nat. Hist., v. 11 (Pawnee; Two Lance Society, 561; Red Lance Society, 567; Thunderbird Lance, 570; Crow Lance, 571; Brave Raven Society, 574; Fighting Lance, 576; Wolf Lance, 576; Blackhead Lance, 576; Knife Lance, 578). A. L. Kroeber, The Arapaho. Am. Mus. Nat. Hist. Bull., 18: 139, 1904.

[14] Lowie, Dances and Societies of the Plains Shoshone, 809–811.

29: Hoebel E-4,5 (1933) 1969 N06 Comanche N06

and actually in many, a girl had no formal voice in the choice of her husband. Her brothers gave her away in exchange for a consideration. The takers were usually older and established warriors and hunters who had the goods. In the Comanche ideal such arrangements made for the best marriages. But they were marriages in which the woman was at the mercy of her husband. Working against the stability of such marriages was a strong current of romantic idealism among the young. The ambition of the adolescent girl was to be a *naiβi*,[5] i.e., a beautiful maiden with lustrous, black hair hanging in long braids, and dressed in a fine fringed buckskin dress. The young bucks for their part strove to attract the attention of the girls by playing the role of *tuiβitsi*: "a handsome young man who looks good on a horse." Wife-absconding was really an escape in which a frustrated wife sought a more romantic match with a daring warrior.

Comanche elopements were invariably linked to a war party. The man in the case would be going on a raid with his friends, and he would make an assignation with the woman to go along. It was a way provided by custom to violate the marriage rights of the rightful husband as defined by custom and sustained by law! A nice example of internal inconsistency in the ways of a culture.

When a woman and her lover took off with a war party, two courses were open to the jilted husband. He could mount in hot pursuit in the hope that he could overtake them before they reached enemy territory. Or he could bide his time until they returned from the raid. In enemy country he could not press his suit; here all Comanches had to stand shoulder to shoulder. Aside from this, he could institute his action wherever he might be able to confront his tortfeasor. He might take along some compatriots—brothers, real or putative—to strengthen his courage and his arm, if need be. A real man, however, went alone. It was not necessary for him to gather witnesses, for a Comanche legal action was in no sense a trial. Questions of evidence rarely, if ever, entered. The wife-stealer, or even the adulterer, had no desire to conceal his deed; his aim was to flaunt his prestige in the face of the challenged husband.

If he followed the dictates of decorum, he politely addressed the defendant as "brother." The defendant replied in kind. Did not Comanche brothers share their wives? Syllogistically the reasoning runs:

> Men who share a wife are brothers.
> This man has assumed a share in my wife.
> Therefore, he is my brother.
> (But he is going to pay for the privilege!)

The immediate goal of the prosecuting husband was to get *nanewɔkə*, restitutive damages. As an opening gambit he placed his demands high,

[5] Phonetic symbols are used as in the International Phonetics System.

29: Hoebel E-4,5 (1933) 1969 N06 Comanche N06

customarily asking for four different kinds of articles (four was the mystic number in which most Indians conceived things). Horses were always demanded, numbering from one to ten. The size of the demand varied directly with the wealth of the defendant and the fortitude of the husband and inversely with the war record of the defendant. The husband hoped to squeeze out as much as the traffic would bear and the wrongdoer was willing to yield.

The defendant on his side would pay in the end, but it would be unseemly to yield readily or to first demands. The procedure was one of higgling and haggling—with always the risk of a violent breakdown in the offing. For the husband, if mean-tempered or short of patience, might well cut the palavering short with a quick attack upon the defendant. Theoretically, then, the injured husband had recourse to use of physical force, if the offender failed to recognize his duty to pay up with a settlement that was reasonable in the eyes of the injured party. In fact, however, this was not a genuine legal privilege-right, since in event of homicide retaliation prevailed. The husband who pressed his suit to the killing point was bound to be slain in turn by the defendant's kinsmen. Here was the fatal weakness of the primitive system of the Comanches. Yet in forty-one of the forty-five recorded adultery and absconding cases the offender paid up and the matter became *res judicata* with an award in favor of the plaintiff. It is evident that the Comanches had a strong sense of the fitness of the law and that, willful as they were, wrongdoers submitted to its dictates.

This condition was implemented by two facts: (1) action was not initiated unless the facts were predetermined—guilt, as we have said, was rarely an issue except in sorcery cases; (2) the elopement pattern worked to tone down the first burst of anger; (3) usage saw to it that the husband could in the final resort always muster a greater amount of force than could the defendant.

In the nature of things, the adulterer or wife-absconder was (or thought he was) a more dangerous man than the husband he was wronging. If he had been left wholly to his own resources, the aggrieved husband would more often than not have been in a poor way to exact restitution. In the achievement of justice Comanche practice saw to it that if the husband were man-to-man on the short end of the power stick, he could marshal his brothers or friends to go a-lawing with, or for, him. When confronted with this deputation, the defendant rarely had recourse to marshaling *his* friends or brothers. It was not good form. And more than that—he had made his bid for prestige, and he would surely look bad if he failed to carry it through alone.

The plaintiff who called to his brothers for help naturally lost prestige to some degree, and in addition he had to turn over all that he received in damages. His "lawyers" got the a' of it.

31: Jones E-5 (1967-1970) 1972 N06 Comanche N06
Oklahoma

278
824
[142]
291
302
[516]

Sanapia preparing medicine.

but since Sanapia almost exclusively uses only the root of the plant for medicine, this concern with flowing water seems ubiquitous on medicine-plant-collecting trips.

278 801 [171] Her dosages of the various botanical medicines follow the mystical number four found in the southern Plains area. The medicinal decoctions and infusions which she prepares are always given in units of four—four cupsful, four spoonsful, and so forth. Her externally applied medicines, such as salves and liniments, are administered with four movements of the hand; and when dried cedar leaves are employed to produce medicine smoke, they are deposited on the live coals in the course of four consecutive abbreviated motions of the hand.

128 In the following discussions, a standardized introductory line will be used for each plant when possible. The Comanche term for the plant will be presented first, followed by Sanapia's translation of the Comanche term. The English translation of the Comanche term will be followed by the binomial classification of the plant, which in turn will be followed by the English common name.

278
824
137 "red berry cedar" *ekapokowa:pi* *Juniperus pinchotii* (red cedar; juniper)